The Grass River Provincial Park Management Plan

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Summary of Public Input and Revisions to the Draft Plan

DECEMBER, 1984

Introduction

This report provides a summary of the public's comments on the Grass River Draft Management Plan, and describes revisions made as a result of these comments. Public participation was invited at drop-in sessions held in The Pas, Cranberry Portage, Snow Lake and Winnipeg in January 1984. Written submissions were encouraged also. Approximately 100 persons and 15 groups or organizations were registered on a mailing list at the conclusion of Step 5 of the planning program (see next page).

Residents of nearby communities expressed a strong sense of identity with the Grass River Provincial Park, in terms of recreation and economic opportunities based on tourism, forestry and mining. Protection of the park's water quality, and management of fish and wildlife were frequent subjects of interest. More intensive resource management to ensure delivery of high quality tourism opportunities and experiences was stressed. A corridor wildlife refuge along PR 391, and the strengthening of sections of the plan dealing with water quality are examples of changes made as a result of local interests and concerns.

Mineral exploration and mining were discussed at length. Mining interests from across Canada expressed concerns that the draft plan too harshly restricted the mining industry's ability to tap the mineral potential critical to its long-term viability. The final management plan integrates mining as a compatible use. In doing so it challenges government and industry to develop model mining operations that clearly demonstrate that such compatibility exists.

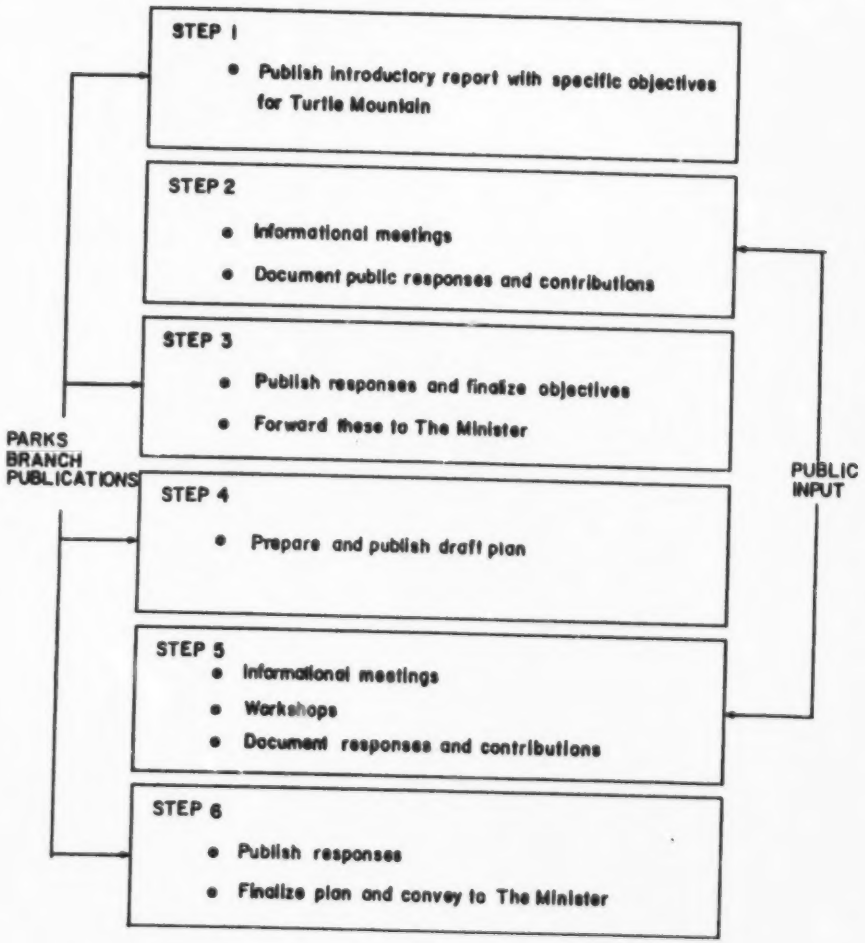
Revisions have been made to other sections of the plan as well, particularly in recreation facilities and services, forestry and trapping.

The various issues and concerns raised during public participation are listed on the following pages along with a highlighting of comments made by participants. A response to these concerns is provided along with an illustration showing whether or not the draft plan was revised.

The management plan has been modified in accordance with the changes documented in this report, and it has now been adopted by the Minister of Natural Resources as the official plan for Grass River Provincial Park.

The Parks Branch wishes to acknowledge and express appreciation to everyone who contributed to the development of the management plan.

Management Planning Process



Park Precepts

ISSUES/CONCERNS	RANGE OF PUBLIC COMMENT	DISCUSSION	ACTION	
			Revised	No Change
Role of mining in Grass River in relation to other park purposes.	- mining should receive a priority at least equal to recreation. - clearly the Ministry appears to be assigning the first or highest priority to recreation while the work required by the producers of mineral wealth is of secondary importance. Generation of wealth is necessary to make recreation possible.	The six park precepts help to define how Grass River differs from other provincial parks, and what distinctive purposes this park should fulfill. They have as their basis the primary purposes or functions of provincial parks provided for in the Provincial Park Lands Act, namely: outdoor recreation, resource conservation and preservation and education. Manitoba's parks, as a matter of government policy, must be planned to accommodate commercial resource uses, where these uses do not compromise the primary purposes noted above. The Grass River Management Plan acknowledges the extraordinary mineral potential of the park area and is accommodating of the mining industry to the greatest extent considered possible within a provincial park. * Although change is not considered necessary in park precepts respecting mining, public and industry concerns have resulted in substantial changes in zoning provisions (see page 11).		● *

Boundaries

ISSUES/CONCERNS	RANGE OF PUBLIC COMMENT	DISCUSSION	ACTION	
			Revised	No Change
Current park boundaries.	- park boundaries should be extended along the Grass River to include Wekusko Falls. - boundaries are artifical and do not encourage long-term planning.	Current park boundaries are considered to be effective from the standpoint of encompassing a headwaters area, and including a representation of the Precambrian Shield and Manitoba Lowlands physiographic regions. The park's configuration may well continue to be a topic of interest as the plan is reviewed in future years.		●

Natural and Cultural Resources

ISSUES/CONCERNS	RANGE OF PUBLIC COMMENT	DISCUSSION	ACTION	
			Revised	No Change
Preservation of significant natural/human history features.	- the preservation of known sites is laudable but the number of unknown sites far exceed those that are known. - protection must be afforded any heritage resources. - establish archaeological reserves to protect heritage sites. - ice caves are cracks in the edge of limestone and can be found anywhere in Northern Manitoba. - the palsa hazel is a common frost boil.	Sites of historical and archaeological interest are non-renewable resources. Their locations are often unknown. Proposed park developments will be referred to the Historic Resources Branch to determine the need for further study, impact assessment and, where necessary, impact mitigation. Surveys to identify sites of both natural and cultural significance will be undertaken as resources become available.		●
Protection of water quality.	- the water quality must be maintained. - no pollution of park's waters. - violations of Clean Environment Commission orders must be acted on.	Minor revisions have been made in the final plan which reinforce the value placed on the park's water quality, and the need to ensure its continued protection and maintenance.	●	
Management of sport fisheries.	- resource management must take precedence over promotion. - resources are dwindling. - water quality must be ensured, otherwise sport and commercial fishing will deteriorate. - implement extensive stocking programs. - develop a fish hatchery for stocking purposes and tourist appeal. - if the area is deteriorating as a fishing area, where are the definitive programs to enhance these resources?	Management of sport fisheries will be guided in part by separation of the park's waterbodies into four different categories: remote, general, special and stocked fisheries. Lakes classed as special sport fisheries may require measures such as lake-specific regulations to ensure maintenance of fish populations. Enhancement of fish stocks through walleye rearing techniques will be investigated for future implementation. Potential impacts on the park's fisheries wll be considered in setting conditions on any proposed recreational or industrial developments.		●

ISSUES/CONCERNS	RANGE OF PUBLIC COMMENT	DISCUSSION	ACTION	
			Revised	No Change
Wildlife management.	- limit commercial/recreation development in areas where caribou herds travel. - more viewing opportunities are needed. - quality hunting is advertised but not delivered. - the moose situation is critical, the population is dwindling and in bad condition. - close all roads to moose hunting even if it is difficult to enforce. - restrictions should apply to everyone including Treaty Indians. - establish a non-hunting corridor along PR 391. - implement predator control programs for wolves and bears. - close part or all of the park to hunting. - caribou hunting should be banned. - make the park a Wildlife Refuge.	The plan calls for the preparation of species plans for moose and caribou to set long-term direction. Such plans will consider all aspects of population dynamics, an assessment of habitat conditions, harvest options, additional study requirements and public information and interpretation programs. Species plans will be updated annually. An early action to aid in replenishing moose herds will be the establishment of a corridor wildlife refuge along PR 391. Hunting within 300 meters on either side of the highway would not be permitted. Caribou hunting will continue in Grass River unless there is a decline in caribou numbers. Then controls on all caribou hunting would be implemented.	●	

Recreational Facilities and Services

ISSUES/CONCERNS	RANGE OF PUBLIC COMMENT	DISCUSSION	ACTION	
			Revised	No Change
Improvement and expansion of camping facilities.	- expand Gyles campground. - provide backcountry/island tent-only campsites.	Upgrading and expansion of the Gyles campground is called for in the final plan. Approximately 20-25 additional camping sites will be developed. A program of designated camping sites in backcountry areas will be implemented over the course of several years.	●	
Improve commercial recreation opportunities.	- new, diversified opportunities like trapline vacations, houseboat rentals ought to be explored. - Reed Lake Lodge needs to be upgraded.	The current number of commercial lodges will be kept at four. Provisions are made for new commercial recreation ventures provided that the resource base can support the increased use, the proposed development is compatible with existing use and site conditions, and the proposed venture is shown to be potentially viable.		●
Improved signage, information opportunities and promotion.	- develop better signage and information. - diversify opportunities through museums, more historical information and points of interest such as an abandoned mining operation. - attractions are needed but not at the expense of the natural heritage. - more park information brochures on significant features, canoe route maps, etc.	Several initiatives aimed at improvement of signing and park information are identified. Co-operation with neighbouring communities is encouraged to develop other tourist attractions.		●
Development of Cranberry Portage and Snow Lake as information centres for the park.	- will Parks Branch assist with this type of development? - use Snow Lake as the centre for the east side of the park including information, overflow camping, tourism centre.	As a longer term objective, the Branch in co-operation with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, will provide planning assistance to strengthen the role of Cranberry Portage as a service centre for the park. Parks Branch, in co-operation with the Department of Highways, will provide better signage at the junction of PR 391 and 392.		●

Commercial Resource Management

ISSUES/CONCERNS	RANGE OF PUBLIC COMMENT	DISCUSSION	ACTION	
			Revised	No Change
Location and extent of forestry operations.	- why exclude forestry from large zones like the General Recreation Zone and yet let mines in. - government and industry do not have a record of proper stewardship. - allow small-scale logging within the General Recreation Zone. - local operators must move into Grass River to stay in business. - there is a need for long-term forest management planning. - the Loucks Lake/Reed Lake corridor does not meet Manfor's needs. - more flexibility on guidelines is needed.	Forestry will remain conditional upon zoning as described in the draft management plan. The Commercial/Recreation Zone has been expanded however to provide some additional areas for timber harvesting. This has been done in consultation with the Forestry Branch in response to concerns raised. A five year forest harvest and regeneration plan is a requirement of the management plan. This five year plan, to be prepared by the Forestry Branch, will address allocation of wood volumes available for harvesting within the park. The management plan retains the concept of a single north-south utility and access corridor in the area of Loucks Lake. Several terms and conditions respecting forestry operations have been revised.	●	

ISSUES/CONCERNS	RANGE OF PUBLIC COMMENT	DISCUSSION	ACTION	
			Revised	No Change
Mineral exploration and mining.	- deterrants to exploration/development will remove Grass River from further serious consideration. This will be a significant loss to the Manitoba mining industry. - the plan effectively removes from long-term exploration, all of the lands in the park and about 20% of the high mineral potential area within the Flin Flon-Snow Lake area. - exploration should be permitted anywhere in the park. - the plan must clarify if mining/processing will or will not be permitted in the park. - where there are conflicts between endangered species and mine operations keep prohibited areas to a minimum. - it is not feasible to impose restrictions on ore hauling trucks and other types of highway transportation.	The extraordinary mineral potential of Grass River Provincial Park is acknowledged. Mineral exploration and mining are permitted throughout the park. Several prevailing conditions will apply to all mining developments. These are: o concentration of ores will be permitted only for small-scale operations, o residential camps will be limited to construction (development) phases only, o no resident camps will be permitted after construction other than those necessary for security and service staff, o storage of chemically active materials (ores, tailings) would be permitted only where there will be no significant impact on the environment. Where mine development proposals exceed these conditions, or conflict with primary park values, full review of the park management plan would be required, including public participations.	●	
Trapping.	- is another resource management tool. - clarify practices, especially the proposal to limit trapping at selected locations. - it is not a problem and should not be curtailed. - a trapper could impart valuable knowledge to the tourist. - should be wound down and eventully excluded.	Trapping is an acceptable use and will be continued in Grass River under the prevailing management system. The proposal to limit trapping at specific locations has been deleted to allay the concerns of trappers that this could lead to the closure of large areas to trapping. The potential for trappers to play a larger role in tourism and park interpretive programs is acknowledged.	●	

ISSUES/CONCERNS	RANGE OF PUBLIC COMMENT	DISCUSSION	ACTION	
			Revised	No Change
Leasing of lakes for wild rice propagation.	- consider leasing small bays in the Recreation Zone for wild rice. - there is a need to establish policy and guidelines for the wild rice in the park.	The leasing of lands in Grass River for the purpose of wild rice propagation is not provided for in the management plan. This position will be reviewed in the future, depending on the success and viability of the wild rice industry in Northern Manitoba.		•

Zoning

ISSUES/CONCERNS	RANGE OF PUBLIC COMMENT	DISCUSSION	ACTION	
			Revised	No Change
The need for zoning.	- zoning has limited the mining industry to areas of little or no potential for success. - restrictive zoning will end all mineral activity in the park. - zoning is not acceptable (to forestry). - establish wilderness zones now before the use patterns change.	Zoning is a means of controlling existing and potential uses and activities. It is a guide which provides clarity and predictability for all park users. The four categories of zones have not been revised, however, mining will not be conditional on zoning as was proposed in the draft management plan. The commercial Resource/Recreation Zone has been expanded to provide additional areas for timber harvesting. In sum, a zoning approach has been retained, while making greater allowances for the needs and concerns of resource industries.		●